

December 10, 1965
5706 Blackstone Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60637

Mr. Eric P. Newman
6450 Cecil Avenue
St. Louis 5, Missouri

Dear Mr. Newman:

You may remember that we sat together at the dinner preceding your lecture at Roosevelt University. At that time I told you that I had a collection of perhaps 3,000 (or more) requisitions on a store apparently owned by Rufus and James Backus, and perhaps managed by Dudley Woodbridge. I believe that I mentioned to you that these requisitions might have been used as currency. Upon looking at them, I am not so sure. I enclose fifteen of them for you to look at. Most ask that "the bearer" be given goods to a certain value. Some ask that an individual be given goods to a certain value. One, at least, asks that goods of a certain character be sent to him. I should guess that the enclosed order slips are fairly typical of the entire collection.

The very high proportion that request payment to "the bearer" would suggest to me that at least a limited use as currency was anticipated. For certainly the recipient would be known in every case. In Norwich, Connecticut, of that day everyone would be known by name, or nearly so.

*I could
have been
named.*

I will be interested in your reaction to these slips.

The reference that I promised you to the U. S. Congress ordering French gold coins clipped before being placed in circulation, I have not yet found. But I will eventually find it and will then forward it to you.

Reactions I have heard to your lecture at R. U. were extremely favorable. I am sorry that my class prevented me from hearing it.

Sincerely,

Richard J. Hooker
Richard J. Hooker

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The following, I chose out of about 50 slips looked at:

"We the Subscribers promise for Value Recd. to pay to Miss Ursula Chandler on demand Fifty-five dollars & eight⁴en cents with interest annually till paid." (signed: Rufus & James Backus, and Elijah Backus

Sir if you will let Mr. Whiteing Ladd have goods to two dollars & twenty-six cents you will oblige yours.

Please to pay ~~or discount~~ with Mr. Abel Edgerton Eight Shilling and Nine pence and you Oblige

Please to pay the bearer one hundred Sents in goods

Sir
I am in Debted to Mr. Rozwell Lathrop about two Dollars which I am to make to him. Common merchant pay at retail. If Oil will be received in payment I wish you to Except this as an Order and in So Doing you will much Oblige your Humble Servant Luke Metcalf

December 23, 1965

Mr. Richard J. Hooker
Roosevelt University
430 South Michigan Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60605

Dear Mr. Hooker:

It was delightful to hear from you with respect to the interesting group of requisitions used at the Bakus store. I do not believe that they were used as currency but in view of the almost total lack of a currency medium, the storekeeper ended up being used as a bank and the charge for operating as a bank was that most of the merchandise be purchased from his store. The profit on the merchandise made it more than worthwhile to operate this banking enterprise. The requisitions were the equivalent of checks. Do you agree that the abnormal number of drafts drawn against the store indicates that the store was the clearing house for small transactions?

Some of these drafts are for actual money but one, in particular, interests me a great deal, and that is one where it is specifically mentioned that the bearer is to be given State money.

Would you be nice enough to look through additional receipts, since you have so many, and see if there are others which mention State money, or Connecticut money, or any particular kind of money, rather than undesignated pounds, shillings, and pence.

A very pleasant Holiday Season, and I look forward to hearing from you as to how you feel these items were used.

I also look forward to hearing from you as to the French gold coin reference.

Thanks for your wholehearted cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

ERIC P. NEWMAN NUMISMATIC
EDUCATION SOCIETY

EPN/atb

January 10, 1966
5706 Blackstone Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60637

Mr. Eric P. Newman
6450 Cecil Avenue
St. Louis 5, Missouri

Dear Mr. Newman:

I have just returned from several weeks on Hilton Head Island, South Carolina. Hence my tardy answer to your letter.

Yes, I do agree that the requisitions served as checks, and further indicate that the Backus store was used as a clearing house for small transactions.

I made a spot check as to how many of the requisitions referred to dollars, rather than to shillings. I enclose one sheet (marked Page 1) in which I jotted down the essential contents of about fifty requisitions. Only two refer to dollars. I then went through about sixty more and listed (see Page 2) only those items that were extraordinary. You can tell from this information, perhaps, whether any further study of the requisitions would prove useful.

I am thoroughly pleased that Roosevelt University may soon have a Numsmatics curriculum, through the efforts of you and your colleagues. It might soon have a national influence. Perhaps in time a scholarly quarterly might be possible, with high-level articles and book reviews.

Sincerely yours,

Richard J. Hooker
Richard J. Hooker

11/10/1966

Page 1.

8 shillings in goods
12 shillings in goods
4 shillings in goods
"pay the Bearer 4 shillings out of your shop"
15 shillings in goods
6 shillings in goods
5 shillings in goods
pay four shillings
pay the bearer five dollars & eighty-one cents in goods
pay three shillings "out of your shop"
let bearer have two shillings and 5 pence half-penny out of your store
let bearer have plow share mold, charge same to me.
7 shillings and 6 pence in goods
pay bearer 17 shillings and 6 pence in goods.
9 shillings, 6 pence in goods
pay Mr. Woodman six shillings and 6 pence "in Your Store"
pay bearer out of your shop 2 shillings, two pence.
order for groceries to be sent.
pay out of your shop in goods to bearer Jedidiah Lathrop some of 19 sh.
please to deliver Dinah 7 sh., 6 pence.
please to let Cary Troop have forty, four shillings and sixpence and charge me.
let Mrs. Winship have eleven sh. in you shop
let bearer Mr. Newcomb have value of 4 sh. and 6 p. in your shop.
please pay Mr. Peter Plumber 9 pence and charge to me.
please let bearer have to amount of 3 sh., and I will settle today.
please let bearer have 1 gallon of W. I. rum, charge to me.
please pay Dr. James Thomas 12 sh. in goods and charge
please to deliver to bearer in goods the value of 8 sh. & 4 pence.
let Mr. Abel have 7 shillings in goods.
let bearer have 2 quarts of rum
let bearer have 6 shillings worth of goods
let bearer have 7 sh. 2 pence worth of goods
let bearer have 2 pounds, 13 sh. out of your store
let bearer have 7 pounds sugar
let bearer have 9 sh. and 6 pence in goods
let bearer have 4 shillings out of your shop
let bearer have 4 shillings and 8 pence out of your store
let bearer have two pounds sugar and 1 quart rum
please pay Mr. Joseph Whalley 6 sh. 9 pence in your shop
please let bearer have out of your store to the amount of 6 shillings.
Please to deliver Mr. Dorius Peck 4 shillings & 6 pence value in goods
please let bearer have 2 quarters of W. I. rum
let Mr. Tift have 10 sh. and 10 pence out of your store
Please pay Mr. Perkin 19 shillings in goods
let bearer Mr. Hyde have 17 shillings in goods
please pay Mr. Metcalf 1 pound 12 shillings in goods at cash price
let bearer have 2 yards London Brown shalloon
let bearer have 6 shillings
please deliver Mr. David Fox 13 sh. & 6 pence value in goods
let Miss Martha Smith have 10 shillings in goods
let Mr. James Thomas have 1 quart molasses and one pint Geneva
please let Mr. Joshua Hyde have 5 dollars in any kind of goods.
For value received I promise to pay Rufus Lathrop 30 pounds, 12 shillings lawful money by Dec. 10 next, with the lawful interest